

THE
Judgment

Of Several Eminent

Divines

OF THE

Congregational VVay.

Concerning A

PASTORS POWER.

Occasionally to Exert Ministerial A C T S
in another C H U R C H, besides
that which is His Own Particular

FLOCK

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WE have carefully perused the following Discourse, and Judg it to be, not only agreeable to true Congregational Principles, but also needful for the Information, and sufficient for the Conviction of such Churches as have been, or may be for any considerable time without the advantage of a Setled Minister among them, that they may not be unnecessarily deprived of the Enjoyment of those Ordinances the Dispensation whereof is so much to be desired: we do therefore Recommend it to the serious Consideration of such as Love Zion's Prosperity.



James Allen.
Samuel Willard.
Michael Wigglesworth.
Cotton Mather.
Nehemiah Walter.



QUESTION.

WHether the Pastor of a particular Congregation may at the Desire of another Church Exercise Ministerial Acts, and in special Dispense the Seals to them that are not his peculiar Charge?

ANSWER.

I Incline to the Affirmative; for,

1. The Ministerial Power, which a Pastor has received from the Lord Christ, is not so confined to his particular Flock, as that He shall cease to be a Minister when he does Act in the Name of the Lord elsewhere.

I cannot in this concur with the Opinion of the Refuter of Dr. Downham's Sermon, and some others, that a Pastor of a Church, Preaching in another Congregation, Acts only as a Gifted Brother, and not as a Minister of the Lord.

I am as to this particular, fully of the same Judgment with the Learned Doctor John Owen, in his Judicious Treatise concerning a Gospel Church, (p. 100, 101.) where he has these words: *Altho' we have no concernment in the Eminent of an indelible Character accompanying Sacred Orders, yet we do not think the Pastoral Office is such a thing, as a*

man must leave behind him every time he goes from Home. For my own part, if I did not think my self bound to Preach as a Minister Authorized in all places, and on all occasions when I am called thereunto, I think I should never Preach more in this World. Thus speaks our Famous Owen. A Pastor does Preach as a Minister, and Bless in the Name of the Lord, as a Minister of His, wherever he may be occasionally called there-to. And if he may, by vertue of his Office, Exert these Ministerial Acts of Preaching and Blessing in other Congregations, why may He not Dispense the Seals? sure he may, unless he performs the other Acts not as an Officer, but as a Brother only. It is true; A Pastor has not that Rule & Authority in another Church, which the Lord Jesus has given to him over that Flock, to which he is specially related. Nevertheless, when another Church does desire him, he has *Potestas precaria*, Power conferred on him for that Time and that Act. Whatever the Rule requires as necessary in order to Dispensing the Seals is here to be seen! E. G. The Dispenser must be set apart to act in the Name of the Lord in Holy Administrations, and he must by a Church of Christ be Chosen to Administer to them; all which is true concerning the Pastor of whom the Question is.

2. If the Pastor of a Church may Administer the Sacrament to the Members of another

ther Congregation, and so to the whole Church in case they shall come to the Church, whereof he is Pastor, and desire such occasional Communion; He may upon as good Grounds go to the Town where the other Church dwelleth, and at their Request Minister to them: For neither the Place, nor the Presence of his own Flock, can make that which is in it self contrary to the Rule of the Word become a regular Act. This Argument seems not easy to be answered, and therefore acute Mr. Hooker instead of solving it, does plainly cut it in pieces. For in his *Survey of Church Discipline* (which is an elaborate and accurate Piece) Part 2d. pag. 65. in answer to that Allegation, *That Members of one Congregation may partake of the Sacrament in another, and then they Receive it from one who is not their Pastor;* He replies thus, *It has been a course which I have ever questioned, and against it many years have alledged many Arguments, and therefore could readily ease my self of the Argument, by professing the Course unwarrantable, &c.* But now there are few or none amongst us, who scruple the Lawfulness of admitting Members of other Churches to their Communion; It uses to be said, they are *Transient Members* of the Church, where they Partake: And why may it not with as good reason be affirmed, that the Minister who Dispenseth

the Seals in another Congregation is a *Transient Pastor*) for ought that I can discern to the contrary, there is as much Ground in the Scripture for *Transient Officers*, as there is for *Transient Members*.

Whereas it is objected, that the Pastor of another Church has no Authority by his Office to require them of another Church to Receive the Sacrament, as he may those of his own Flock; It may be replied, he has as much Power to do that, as he has to Enjoyn one of another Congregation occasionally to receive, where he is not a Member. The Request of the Persons concerned doth sufficiently Empower him *pro hac vice* to Exert a Ministerial Act towards them.

3. In the primitive and pure Times of the Christian Church, not only the Apostles, but ordinary Pastors of Churches did occasionally Dispense the Seals in other Churches, besides those wherein they were fixed. It is the Opinion of very Learned Men, that Polycarp was the Angel of the Church in Smyrna, unto whom the Lord Jesus directed that Epistle in Revelations, chap. 2. So Papias, Eusebius, Irenaeus, Menochius, &c. He was the Apostle John's Scholar: And (as Hieron, Eusebius, and other Ecclesiastick Writers, Testify) was by the Apostles themselves Ordained the

Pastor of that Church. This Holy Minister is not (as most Officers in the Seven Asiatic Churches were) blamed or reproved for any Fault. Yet did the Pastor of that Church (if Polycarp was he) occasionally Administer the Lords Supper to the Christians in Rome, where there was in those Days a pure and a true Church. There was some Difference in Opinion between *Anicetus* the Pastor of the Church in Rome, and *Polycarp* Pastor of the Church at *Smeyrna*, who undertook a long Journey from *Smeyrna* to Rome, to Assist in composing the Differences about small matters, which in those early days threatned the Churches. *Anicetus*, only to Testify his Love and Honour to *Polycarp*, requested him to Administer the Sacrament of the Lords Supper to that Church, where not *Polycarp* but *Anicetus* was the Pastor. *Irenaeus* (Lib. 3. cap. 1.) says, that *Polycarp* always taught the Churches to observe those things, which he Learned from the Apostles, and nothing else. If that be so, were the Apostles here, they would allow Pastors occasionally to Exercise Ministerial Acts in other Congregations, besides those where they are fixed. See Mr. *Foxes* Martyrol. Vol. 1. p. 57.

4. Eminent Men amongst those of the Congregational way, have been for the Affirmative in the Question before us; Indeed, Rigid

Rigid Separatists, Mr. *Cann*, and such like *Brownists*, have stiffly maintained that a Pastor may not Exert an Official Act, except among his own peculiar Flock. But they that are truly Congregational have declared themselves to be otherwise perswaded. That the First Elders in *New-England* were of this Judgment, I conclude from their Platform of Discipline, chap. 15. Sect. 4. Their words are these. *The Members of one Church occasionally coming into another, we willingly admit them to partake of the Lords Table, it being the Seal of our Communion, not only with Christ, nor only with Members of our own Church, but also with all the Churches of the Saints; in which regard we refuse not to Baptize their Children presented to us, if either their own Minister be Absent, or such a fruit of Holy Fellowship be desired with us. In like case such Churches as are furnished with more Ministers than one, do willingly afford one of their own Ministers to supply the place of an absent or sick Minister of another Church for a needful Season. That Platform of Church Discipline was in a peculiar manner the Composition of the Reverend Mr. Richard Mather, the Famous Teacher of the Church at Dorchester in New-England. That he was for the Affirmative in the Question before us is manifest from what yet remains, and is to be seen written with his own Hand. The Renowned Mr. Thomas Hooker of Hartford*

ford in New-England, desired that some of the Ministers in the Massachusetts-Bay (and particularly Mr. Mather) would communicate to him their Apprehensions concerning this Position: *viz.* The Entreaty of one Congregation does not give an Officer of another Congregation Power of Office to Administer Seals to their Assembly. Mr. Mather's Answer in a Letter Dated, Nov. 6. 1645. was in the following words. 1. 'It seems an Officer of a Church may lawfully Dispense Seals in another Church at their Entreaty and Request. The Reason is because there is a Communion between Churches, as Sisters; by vertue of which they are to take care, and do for one another, as each ones occasion and necessity may require. Cant. 8. 8. *We have a Little Sister, and she has no Breasts: what shall we do for her?* Now if Churches must do Offices of Love and Helpfulness to one another, as each ones Occasions shall need, they must also afford their Help in this particular, of Lending their Officers to Minister the Seals in their Assemblies. This particular will follow from the General aforementioned, unless there be some particular Command from God prohibiting the same.

2. 'By this Communion of Churches it is lawful for a Pastor, upon the Request of a Member of another Church, to Administer the Seals to that Member being present when the Pastor is Administering to his own Church.

And

' And if this be lawful, why not the other
 ' also? If Christians may hold Communion
 ' one with another in the Works and Duties
 ' of each others Members Receiving the Sacra-
 ' ments; why not also in the Works and Du-
 ' ties of each others Ministers Dispensing the
 ' same? For as the Minister stands in special
 ' Relation to his own Church, as a Minister,
 ' so a Member stands in special Relation to his
 ' own Church as a Member. If therefore the
 ' Member may be received into Communion
 ' in another Church for a time, or for one
 ' Act, as a Member, and yet his Memberly
 ' Relation to his own Church not be violated
 ' thereby; it seems as rational also, that a Mi-
 ' nister of one Church may in like sort be
 ' received into Communion in another Church
 ' for a time, or for one Act as a Minister, and
 ' yet his Ministerial or Pastoral Relation to
 ' his own Church not be violated thereby;
 ' for it is hard to conceive how such an act of
 ' the Minister should be prejudicial to his Re-
 ' lation to his own Church, as a Minister, any
 ' more than the Act of the Member be preju-
 ' dicial to his Relation, as a Member. Besides,
 ' in the one case, a Minister doth what he
 ' doth only at the Request of one Member,
 ' but in other there is the Request of the whole
 ' Church. And if the one may be done by
 ' the Request of one which is the less; why
 ' not the other, at the Request of the whole
 ' Church, and which is greater? If

' If it be say'd, in the one Case a Ministers
' own Church is present, but not in the o-
ther.

The Answer is ;

i. ' That the Members Church had as much
' need to be present, when the Member doth
' the Duty of a Member in Receiving the Seals,
' as the Ministers Church, be present, when he
' does the Ministers Duty in Dispensing the
' same.

ii. ' If therefore a Member may do an Act and
' Work of a Member in the absence of the
' Church, whereto he belongs ; why may not
' the Minister also do an Act and Work of his
' Office, as a Minister in the absence of that
' Church, whereto he most peculiarly is a Mini-
' ster ? I do not yet perceive how the presence
' of the Ministers Church is requisite in the one
' case, any more than the presence of the Church
' in the other.

1. ' I want a good Reason for this, that this
' Act of the Minister to Members of another
' Church should be lawful in his own Church-
' es presence, and unlawful in their absence.
' If consent be requisite, that may be had, though
' they be not corporally present at all. But if
' the thing be unlawful in his Churches absence
' it is not (for ought I know) his Churches
' presence that will warrant or excuse him there-
' in ; no though his Church were all present,
' and though the Act he now doth to others.

be to no more but only to one Member of another Church. Thus Mr. Mather in his Letter to Mr. Hooker.

Mr. Norton who was many Years an Eminent Teacher of the Church in Ipswich, and after that at Boston, his Answer to Apollonius is by Hornbeck and Others, Esteemed the most Learned Book that has been Published in defence of Congregational Principles. Now in that Book (Pag. 80, 81, 82.) he affirms, that tho' a Pastor cannot Authoritatively perform the Ministerial Acts of his Office in another Church, as he may in his own, nevertheless that Charitatively he may do it, Provided that the Exercise thereof be duly qualified, that is to say, that the Church where he does Minister shall request him to perform Ministerial Acts among them, and that the Church be necessitated to that request which is the case (saith he) of an Inorganick Church with respect to the Administring. of Sacraments. The exercise of Ministerial Power thus qualified is no way repugnant to the Liberty or Summity of a particular Church.

Mr. Thomas Shepard, the first Pastor of the Church at Cambridge in New-England, and Mr. John Allyn, Pastor of the Church at Dedham, in their defence of the Nine Positions (Printed in the Year 1648) in answer to Mr. Ballacknowledge that though a Minister has not such power in another Church, as he has over them, that are his proper Flock, nevertheless that he may chari-

carefully put forth an Act of his Office to those in another Church of whom he is no Officer: Pag. 132. 133. and again 134. in Answer to that Question *Whether a Minister may Administer the Seals in another Congregation?* Their words are, *We will not deny but that occasionally being called thereunto by the desire of the Church, he may Lawfully do the same.* This was the Judgment of Mr. Shepard of Cambridge and Mr. Allen of Dedham, both of them famous in New-England.

Dr. Tho. Goodwin has truly stated and asserted the Congregational way, as it differs from Presbyterianism and Brownism. Now that that great Divine was for the Affirmative in the Question under Controversy, is well known, and in a Letter of his to a Minister at Boston in New-England, Dated March 25th. 1679, (which was not long before he was Translated to Glory) His words are these; 'A Church beginning to become a Church may have Liberty while without Elders to receive in or cast out, as occasion is, yet I do advise that they should hasten to Choose Elders to those Ends, or if they do not, that they may take the Elders of another Church, whom they confide in, and Electively Choose for that purpose, they may make use of them, he or they having Power conferred on them for that Act by the Brethren. This being my private Opinion that an Elder, one set apart for that Office in any Church is truly a Minister

' Her occasionally to Exercise Ministerial Acts,
 ' as he is called thereunto; and this though
 ' it seems to warrant a constant Presbytery over
 ' other Churches, yet is clear a different thing;
 ' for such a Presbytery is of a settled ordinary
 ' course, and will challenge the Power; not so
 ' here in this Case, it being Elective, and the
 ' power of chusing whom and where arbitra-
 ' rily remaining in the Church as they shall
 ' judge *Ita sentio, ita sensi*: and so I have pra-
 ' ctised in ordaining those worthy Ministers,
 ' Mr. George Griffith, and Mr. Lee to their
 ' Churches, being by them called thereunto;
 ' and thus our Elders do practise to this day.
 ' Every true Minister actually such to his own
 ' Church is *medium applicabile* a Means and In-
 ' strument that may apply to any Ministerial
 ' Act out of his own Church in any other
 ' Church if he be called thereunto by them.
 ' Thus Dr. Goodwin, a man never to be men-
 ' tioned without Respect and Honour. By these
 ' things we see what has been the Judgment of
 ' the most Eminent Ministers of Christ amongst
 ' those that are called Congregational men. What
 ' the Sentiments of those named Presbyterians
 ' have been, is needless to mention. Blessed
 ' be the Lord Jesus Christ, in that there is cause
 ' to hope that those Names of distinction are
 ' now at an end; since at London, and through-
 ' out England they are become United Brethren.

To conclude, I doubt not but that when a Sister Church has no Teaching Officer, and consequently no instituted Ordinances in a stated way administred amongst them, for them to request their Neighbours to dispense the Seals to them, provided this shall not retard their Settlement under a Pastor of their own, will be more pleasing to God, than for them to live from year to year like Pagans without any Sacraments, and perhaps multitudes of their Children not to be Marked for the Lambs of Christ ; & that Churches (Pastors and Bretheren) in a Vicinity may and should in this way manifest their Brotherly kindness and communion. Canticles 8. 8.

F I N I S.